

received by the Ministry of Works and the Department to put the recommendations of the report into operation. The recommendations of the report were designed principally to obtain:—

- (a) A clearer definition of responsibilities amongst the senior officers of the Department;
- (b) Decentralization of much of the Department's work from Wellington;
- (c) Specialization in senior technical appointments; and
- (d) Amalgamation of some of the public-works districts with a view to eliminating those in which large construction works had practically ceased and in which there appeared to be no prospect of large works being undertaken in the years immediately ahead.

The Department itself was reconstituted in four divisions, these being the Engineering, Architectural, Housing, and Administrative Divisions. The Engineer-in-Chief remained responsible for the design and construction of all engineering work carried out by the Department. The Government Architect was similarly given control over the Architectural Division of the Department, and made responsible for the design and construction of public buildings. The Director of Housing Construction was given administrative control over the Housing Construction Division, and made responsible for the implementation of the Government's housing policy. The Under-Secretary was given control over the non-technical administration of the whole Department.

Prior to this reorganization, the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. W. L. Newnham, had been both Permanent Head and Under-Secretary of the Department. Under the new arrangement he retained the position of Permanent Head until his retirement on the 31st March last, when the Department came under the administrative control of the Commissioner of Works.

In the light of actual experience it has become evident that certain of the recommendations referred to above cannot be given full effect, and further readjustments will probably be necessary. While the general nature of the recommendations are not in any way disputed, considerable difficulties have arisen in effecting any real degree of decentralization to the six new public-works districts, and consideration is now being given to the grouping of these districts for administrative purposes. Further, it has emerged in practice that the reduction in the number of districts has been carried rather too far, and that a further district will have to be constituted.

In dealing with these changes which have taken place in the Public Works Department it is fair to point out the close association which has always existed since the earliest colonial days between public-works policy and the development and progress of New Zealand. The Department is now faced with the blending of the older traditions with fresh ideas as the techniques of physical planning are brought into operation. With the transition from extensive to intensive forms of development, a very great task now lies ahead of the Department, and it is essential that every possible step should be taken to ensure that it should be properly constituted and adequately manned to undertake this task. There is at present an acute shortage of technical staff, and the departure of trained personnel to more lucrative positions outside the Department can only be viewed with alarm.

The necessity for an improved system of estimating and costing has been apparent in the Department for many years, and the time has long since been reached when this work should be put on a better basis. What is required is a system of costing which will permit details of costs to be obtained quickly